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Week of
October 12, 1942

Critics'

THEATRE REVIEWS

1942

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†"Let Freedom Sing" opened Monday, October 5th, at the Longacre Theatre.
†"The Eve of St. Mark" opened Wednesday, October 7th, at the Cort Theatre.
†"Count Me In" opened Thursday, October 8th, at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre.
†"Three Men on a Horse" opened Friday, October 9th, at the Forrest Theatre.

THEATRE REVIEWS IS A COMPLETE GUIDE AND RECORD TO THE NEW YORK SHOWS

Critics' Theatre Reviews brings you each week the complete reviews as they originally appeared in these New York papers

NEW YORK SUN
NEW YORK POST
NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
NEW YORK NEWSPAPER "PM"
NEW YORK TIMES
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
NEW YORK JOURNAL AMERICAN

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"Three Men On a Horse"

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
October 10, 1942

Revive Old Comedy At Forrest Theatre

By JOHN ANDERSON

AS IF to remind the Mayor that the horses also may provide innocent merriment Alex Yokel revived his old hit "Three Men on a Horse" at the Forrest last night, with William Lynn again playing his original part of Erwin the little greeting card poet from Ozone Heights, N. J. Erwin, you may remember, just wrote down the way he thought the races would turn out and the horses graciously made it right every time. But Erwin, the Mayor will be happy to know, never bet. That, he felt, would spoil the fun of it.

There is still plenty of fun in the farce, for all the familiarity of its lines and situations and in spite of the fact that Mr. Holm's direction hasn't the driving energy and hilarity that George Abbott's had in 1935. And the cast is not as brilliantly cockeyed.

But after all the play is a sound piece of machinery, and it has been played by all sorts of companies in many languages all over the world. By reviving it now Mr. Yokel is shrewdly relying on the theory that, there is a new generation in the theatre audience every seven years.

From the beginning Mr. Lynn has been practically perfect as the wonderful Erwin, the innocent wizard of the tracks, and his scenes with the gamblers who kidnap him, and cherish him as if he were the U. S. mint, are still hilarious. Since I've seen the farce four times, even its best scenes naturally dwindle in surprise, for I heard it the first time.

Teddy Hart, from the original cast, helps enormously to give the fun its remembered zest, and while Harry MacMahon and Sid Stone lack the gaiety, desperation, and cynicism which Millard Mitchell and Sam Levene gave to it so superbly, they score the main points. Even the original cast, as its long run went on and on, began to horse it too much.

Perhaps it is an irresistible temptation with a good joke and in any case "Three Men on a Horse" remains an excellent laughing matter.

'THREE MEN ON A HORSE'

A farce in three acts by John Cecil Holm and George Abbott; staged by Mr. Holm; revived at the Forrest Theater on October 9, 1942, by Alex Yokel. The cast:

Audrey Trowbridge	Kay Loring
The Tailor	J. Ascher Smith
Erwin Trowbridge	William Lynn
Clarence Dobbins	Fleming Ward
Delivery Boy	Don D'Arcy
Harry	William Foran
Charlie	Horace MacMahon
Frankie	Teddy Hart
Patsy	Sid Stone
Mabel	Jean Casto
Moses	Richard Huey
Gloria	Iris Hall
Al	James Truex
Mr. Carver	William Balfour
Hotel Maid	Gay Seabrook

NEW YORK POST
October 10, 1942

"Three Men on a Horse" Revived at the Forrest

By WILELLA WALDORF

ALEX YOKEL opened what he calls a "Comedy Festival" last night at the Forrest Theatre, with a revival of "Three Men on a Horse." Mr. Yokel originally produced the play on Broadway in January, 1935, and it proceeded to run for 835 performances. Four touring companies went out with it, and it was even done in London with a glossary of quaint American expressions in the program for the guidance of puzzled Britishers.

Last night's revival, directed by John Cecil Holm, who collaborated on the script with George Abbott, went off at breakneck speed, raising plenty of laughs. Even if you happen to have seen the play four or five times already, it is still funny.

The story of the writer of greeting card verses who lives in Ozone Heights and dopes out the local horse races for relaxation during the long bus-ride to the office every day, must be familiar to most theatre-goers. How he has a tiff with his wife, takes a few drinks too many and winds up in the Lavillere Hotel picking the ponies for a trio of gamblers is now being acted again in the frenzied style of madhouse farce, with William Lynn, Horace MacMahon, Teddy Hart and other charter members from the first cast repeating performances that once made history.

All of them are in good form, notably Mr. Lynn, who even seems to be surpassing himself in the role of Erwin, the greeting card poet who is late with his verses for Mother's Day, but actually makes a lot more than his usual $40 a week picking winners for Charlie, Frankie and Patsy to bet on.

Of the newcomers, Sid Stone is properly tough and becomingly dumb as Patsy, the top man of the gang, with Jean Casto making his girl-friend Mabel, the retired chorus girl, into an amusingly simple, even rather touching, figure.

The rest of the company is capable and the production compares favorably with the original as we remember it. Mr. Holm has directed with the emphasis on speed and some of the actors talked so fast that they almost lost their voices at times. Teddy Hart, of course, tapers off into a squeak every time he utters a sound, but he's been doing that for years. It's part of his comedy technique.

Why Mr. Yokel decided to revive this particular play just now we don't know precisely, except that business on Broadway is good and if you can't find a smart new comedy to produce, you may as well resurrect an old one.

It may be, too, that Mr. Yokel was reminded of "Three Men on a Horse" by Mayor LaGuardia's campaign against gambling. Neither Patsy, Charlie nor Frankie has any offspring to run to the Mayor and report their fathers' iniquities, however, so they are all, probably, perfectly safe.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
October 10, 1942

Left at the Post

By HOWARD BARNES

IT TAKES a tough play to stand up in revival. It takes a lot of theatrical craftsmanship to consummate the resurrection. "Three Men on a Horse," which Alex Yokel is presenting at the Forrest, is wanting on both counts. The John Cecil Holm-George Abbott comedy may have been a boisterous event when it was first shown here some seven years ago. It is not nearly so funny today. Even though some of the original players romp through their parts in a farcical commentary on what Mayor LaGuardia likes to call the tin horn gambling racket, the production is likely to make you wonder how it ever weathered 835 performances in its initial run.

* * *

Farce is fragile stage merchandise. With Abbott at the controls in 1935 the fable of the dim-wit suburbanite having miraculous hunches about horse racing was a rollicking burlesque. It was a bit of authentic dramatic Americana about that uneasy and remote period of the mid-'30s. Lacking the shrewd Abbott showmanship and seen in temporal perspective, it is no better than a trickily contrived piece of slapstick, enlivened by occasional gags and wisecracks. There is laughter in the present show, but not nearly enough to make it seem worthy of revival.

* * *

Its greatest asset is the presence of William Lynn in his original role of Erwin, the meek dope from Ozone Heights who tried to write greeting-card verses and pick the ponies simultaneously. He has little of the shy bewilderment which made the character so humorously sympathetic half a dozen years ago, but he stamps the show with whatever authority it still has. Perhaps the chief trouble with this latter-day "Three Men on a Horse" is the fact that it betrays every flaw in the play itself. Few comparatively recent productions, no matter how successful they may have been, could avoid this pitfall.

* * *

Since comparisons are inevitable in a project of this nature, it might be noted that Sam Levene and Millard Mitchell were far more effective as a pair of two-bit gamblers than Horace MacMahon and Sid Stone are in the current offering. Teddy Hart is back in an over-sized derby, but he seems a bit tired of the part. The other roles are handled with marked lack of skill. Yokel means "Three Men on a Horse" to be the first of a series of comedy revivals. He will have to do much better than this to make yesterday's farces pull their weight in the main stream of a theatrical season.

NEW YORK SUN
October 10, 1942

'Three Men on a Horse' Is Revived at the Forrest Theater

By RICHARD LOCKRIDGE

THE funny, ingenious little farce about the greeting card poet who picked nothing but winners and was shanghied for his rather mystic genius bobbed up again last evening at the Forrest Theater. That would be, of course, "Three Men on a Horse," the accomplishment of John Cecil Holm and George Abbott. It first saw the lights of Broadway in 1935 and ran almost forever.

Alex Yokel, who started it on its canter, has brought it back again. The admission charges are cut; the entertainment remains about where it was. Erwin Trowbridge is undiminished by the passage of time. Still he is all meek little men. Still he dopes the races for his amusement and ours as he rides the bus to Ozone Heights; still he is gobbled up one dim morning when, discouraged by life and brothers-in-law, he wanders into a shoddy bar-room inhabited by three small-time gamblers. They take him over, you may remember. They ride him back and forth on the bus and make him pick winners; they shower the stage with money and the fragments of Erwin's best lyrics and get him in a fine dither, from which he emerges triumphant.

And still it is deft and comical; farce written with a fine eye for situation and considerable amused enlargement upon character. It is funny because it is intrinsically funny, and because William Lynn is back to play the role of Erwin, which he originated. Mr. Lynn, small and baffled, hair hanging down over his forehead, wearing long underwear and jumping at any loud noise, is a good half of "Three Men on a Horse." You will be pleased to know that Teddy Hart, also, is in the cast, playing the smallest and most explosive of the gamblers.

The rest of the cast, although always better than adequate, isn't quite up to the original. Millard Mitchell and Sam Levene are rather noticeably absent. Joyce Arling got a quality into her playing of little Mrs. Trowbridge that Kay Loring doesn't quite manage. You can call this, except for Mr. Lynn and Mr. Hart, a superior road company production.

But these are really concerns of the historian. What matters is that "Three Men on a Horse" remains diverting. The fun hasn't dried out of it. It is really just as amusing as you remember it.

"Three Men On a Horse"

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
October 10, 1942

'3 Men on a Horse' Revived at Forrest Still Running Strong

"Three Men on a Horse," comedy by John Cecil Holm and George Abbott, revived by Alex Yokel at the Forrest Theatre, New York, Oct. 9, 1942.

★ ★ ★

By BURNS MANTLE

IT WAS the prediction of this dopester that "Three Men on a Horse," being concerned with a subject about which women playgoers knew little and probably cared less, would prove popular with men playgoers for a few months and then fade out.

Just to spite us, "Three Men on a Horse" ran on for a couple of years—for 835 performances to be exact—was played for many more months in the United States and Canada by four touring companies; was translated into several languages and played with great success throughout Europe and in Australia, and was finally made into a successful movie by the Warners, who backed the original stage production.

That brand of prophecy demands what practically amounts to second sight, but can be achieved if a fellow puts his mind to it.

Facts Are Facts

Now Alex Yokel, the original producer, has revived the John Cecil Holm-George Abbott farce at the Forrest Theatre. This time we shall omit the guess work and stick to facts.

Fact one: "Three Men on a Horse" is just as funny and just as noisy as it was when first produced.

Fact two: A dollar-and-a-half audience can laugh just as hard as, and maybe a little harder than, a $4.40 or $3.30 audience. And did.

Fact three: The revival, having been directed by Mr. Holm, apparently misses none of the tricks that the first production, directed by George Abbott, established to the play's profit and the audience's satisfaction.

Fact four: William Lynn, who was the original Erwin Trowbridge, the most popular greeting card salesman who ever lived in Ozone Heights, N. J., is again doping the horses with the same amusing bewilderment that characterized his first 835 performances, which goes to prove that the little fellows are often blessed with a prodigious stamina.

Horsey Alumni

Fact five: Mr. Lynn's support is practically recruited entirely from the "Three Men on a Horse" alumni. Teddy Hart is again playing the very vocal Frankie, Horace MacMahon is again the suspicious Charlie, Fleming Ward the irritating brother-in-law.

Fact six: The newcomers include Sidney Stone, replacing Sam Levene; Kay Loring, replacing Joyce Arling; Jean Casto, replacing Shirley Booth; William Foran, taking on the role of the barkeep which he played in Chicago. All competent substitutes, Mr. Stone doing a particularly good job in sustaining the excitement as well as the roar of the proceedings.

Fact seven: The production seems a bit road-worn, but, as the saying goes, you can't expect everything for a dollar sixty-five.

Fact eight: This tout still believes "Three Men on a Horse" is a great man's show.

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER "PM"
October 11, 1942

The Horse Is Back In Harness Again

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

IT'S FIVE or six years since *Three Men on a Horse* wound up its fabulous run on Broadway, and in the interval it has been made into a movie and turned into a musical. Seeing it revived at the Forrest Friday night was almost like having a periodical gander at the family photograph album. It's true I've never seen *Three Men* given in Latin, or danced as a ballet, but even so I can hardly imbue these lines with any sense of pioneering or discovery.

Any one, however, for whom it's still virgin soil should have a good time at it. Even in its heyday it never seemed to me a great laugh show, but it's a good run-of-the-mill gag farce. And in Erwin Trowbridge, the greeting-card artist and inspired race-horse dopester, it has one of the best figures in the theater's gallery of little guys. Erwin brings a human and likeable quality to the play's otherwise routine proceedings, and William Lynn is once again playing him with much of his old appeal, for the stubborn mouse he is. Teddy Hart, Fleming Ward and others from the original cast are also on hand. The production is brisk, though with stock-company overtones, and the prices are extremely moderate.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
October 10, 1942

Three Men on a Horse Back at Popular Prices

By JOHN MASON BROWN

AFTER an absence of something like seven years Erwin is back. Erwin who? Why Erwin Trowbridge, of course; Erwin the bard of Mother's Day Greetings; Erwin the little fellow from Ozone Heights, N. J., who is a genius at doping out turf winners; Erwin the hero of Three Men on a Horse. What is more, William Lynn is once again playing him.

Mr. Lynn suffered and conquered as Erwin for 835 consecutive performances when John Cecil Holm's and George Abbott's farce first captivated New York. Now, in Alex Yokel's popular-priced revival at the Forrest, he continues to mix Pegasus and the ponies as freshly as if he and Erwin had never met before.

• • •

Teddy Hart and Fleming Ward are two other survivors of the original company in the present cast. All things considered, in again here to be seen.

the play still holds its many laughs and passes the evening agreeably. It is farce, broad, reliable and good natured; farce built around the sure formula of the worm that turns, but farce which is often developed with invention.

As the pint-sized Casper Milquetoast who, after a petty quarrel with his wife, reels into the bar of a cheap New York hotel, gets drunker there, and, because of his wizardry at picking winners, makes a considerable fortune for the three race track heels and their moll who seize upon him as an investment, Mr. Lynn remains genuinely diverting. He wanders in as a character out of the comic strip. Unlike the funny papers, however, Mr. Lynn is really funny. It is easy to laugh at his Erwin. Mr. Lynn knows what he is up to, overlooks no values and provides a more than generous supply of easy-going amusement.

• • •

Of course, those of us who were first introduced to Three Men on a Horse way back in January, 1936, miss certain qualities and people in the present revival. We cannot help missing Sam Levene in particular, who was so irreplaceable as the toughest of the touts. Sid Stone, though competent, is no match for him. We miss Millard Mitchell, too, as his henchman, although Horace MacMahon is capable. We also wish that Teddy Hart, who is a droll fellow, had brought more technique to his playing and were not all noise and shrillness. And we cannot help noting that Mr. Holm's direction, which is often merely strident, lacks the punch and drive of Mr. Abbott's. Or regretting the stock company quality of the acting of some of the lesser roles, especially in the case of William Balfour's Mr. Carver.

Even so, it is good to have Three Men on a Horse back again. It holds up well. At its present price it is a good buy. Not unnaturally, it is bound to seem more amusing to those cluding the passage of time and a $1.65 top, seeing it for the first time than to those who have seen it before. The point is that it is

NEW YORK TIMES
October 10, 1942

'Three Men on a Horse,' Comedy on the Turf Sport, Returns to Broadway; Teddy Hart, William Lynn in the Cast

NATURALLY no one living in New York would consider putting a bet on the ponies these days, so undoubtedly it was in an earnest effort to keep alive the sport of kings that Alex Yokel last night revived that great historical document on the subject, "Three Men on a Horse." First produced in the scarlet gambling days of 1935, it ran on and on, went into the movies and later into musical comedy in a version called "Banjo Eyes," and gave to the language a name—Erwin—that probably would have stuck there as a synonym for timid bewilderment had not Milquetoast beaten it in by a head. And as Mr. Yokel put it on as the first of what he plans as a series of popular priced revivals at the Forrest, it was still very funny indeed.

Five members of the company which first played the John Cecil Holm-George Abbott comedy are back again, the list including William Lynn, the one and only Erwin. As bothered as ever by Ozone Heights, N. J., his brother-in-law, Mother's Day greeting cards and his commuter's bus as a necessary aid to handicapping, Mr. Lynn is quite wonderful. So, too, is Teddy Hart, the man at the other end of the cigar who has returned as Frankie, the wild-eyed, one of the three gamblers who capture Erwin to mark their cards for the four horse parlays that have been the curse of the business from its beginning.

Colleagues of the frenzied Teddy are Horace MacMahon and Sid Stone, vice Millard Mitchell and Sam Levene, and Mabel the girl friend of Patsy the gambler is played with a magnificent air of the Follies by Jean Casto. Fleming Ward, who was the brother-in-law for a couple of years before, is back again; and so is Richard Huey, the redoubtable Moses, who must be a few hundred pounds heavier now. Mr. Holm directed the revival, forgetting none of Mr. Abbott's original speed, so that the whole stage much of the time is churning like a football game.

It will be remembered that this product of a loose age concerns a writer of greeting-card sentiments who to amuse himself on the trip home figures out the winners of the next day's races. After trouble at the house, he wanders alcoholically into the clutches of the three gamblers, who cajole him, and threaten him, into giving them his selections, thereby breaking the bookies, causing them to lay off the firm's bets and otherwise raising as much havoc in the industry as has Mayor La Guardia. But once Erwin has bet money on the selections himself, he can't pick them any more, the distinction between fun and business probably pointing a moral somewhere.

Possibly, Broadway being what it is, the Mayor's recent edict on gambling was what prompted Mr. Yokel to remember he had a property named "Three Men on a Horse." If so, O. K. to the Little Flower, on a parlay.

L. N.

"The Eve of St. Mark"

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
October 8, 1942

The Eve of St. Mark Is a Very Moving War Play

By JOHN MASON BROWN

UNTIL last night at the Cort the war in our theater had not been seriously dealt with as ours, at least in the sense of finding America an active participant. Spain during the Revolution, Finland in the early days, Paris under German rule and especially London in the blitz had provided dramatists with failures or successes and with plays eloquent or poor. In The Eve of St. Mark, however, Maxwell Anderson has carried the war to our doorsteps. He has shown it to us as our own war and in our own terms—in our homes, in our camps and at those doomed island outposts in the Philippines where courage turned defeats into victories.

The result is a drama which is not only the most moving war play to have been produced here since Pearl Harbor, but by all odds the best play Mr. Anderson has written in many a year. Considering most of these war plays, and not forgetting such scripts by Mr. Anderson as Key Largo, Journey to Jerusalem or Candle in the Wind, this may seem empty praise. Yet it is not nearly so empty as it sounds.

• • •

Whether The Eve of St. Mark is a good play or not almost seems beside the point. Its shortcomings are easy enough to spot. But it is deeply affecting. It has, too, its admirable interludes of tough soldier talk which find Mr. Anderson using the vernacular with the kind of pungency he has not shown since he collaborated with Laurence Stallings on What Price Glory?

This time Mr. Anderson has written largely in prose. That this prose happens to be more effective than most of Mr. Anderson's poetry means only that his dialogue gains in directness by having gained in simplicity. What he is mixing in The Eve of St. Mark, with palpable affection even when his skill or his taste—or both—abandon him, is a material as homespun as Our Town with stuffs as heroic as They Were Expendable.

Mr. Anderson is writing of the war on the home front and in the Pacific; writing of it as it invades both fronts simultaneously. His story is anything but elaborate. It is a simple chronicle of a farm boy, yanked away from his family and separated from his fiancee, to whom he remains faithful. He chooses to die with his comrades on a rocky island fighting the Japs, when malaria has weakened them and their losses have been heavy and they might have retreated honorably.

So much for the heroic choice which is so frequently the ennobling concern of Mr. Anderson's plays, and which the dispatches prove is not the special property of high tragedy. Mr. Anderson has stated this dilemma before in more stinging words, though never in such devastating terms. To be true to the legend of the Eve of St. Mark, Mr. Anderson has his heroine see her lover. Indeed, Mr. Anderson outdoes the legend by having his hero talk both to her and to his mother around the globe in one of the most uncomfortable of his sentimental scenes. It is a scene that should be quickly blue-penciled.

• • •

Although one may wish that Mr. Anderson knew when to stop, and wonder why a poet should on occasion be so pedestrianly explicit, and regret the unnecessary manner in which he insists upon crossing and recrossing his t's, the communicated emotion of Mr. Anderson's new play cannot be denied. Regardless of how his script might seem 10 years from today, it has the virtue of reflecting this moment and contributing to it. It speaks to the heart irresistibly even when the head says "No." More than in its proofs of skill or power, its major source of strength lies in the fact that it is so quiveringly near just now to everyone's mail and to each day's reading in our newspapers. This agonizing proximity to reality endows The Eve of St. Mark with a strength which at present is impossible to withstand.

Also fortifying the script, and making one willing to forget its Star-Wagon moments, is the production it has been given by the Playwrights' Company. Lem Ward has directed it admirably. Howard Bay has set it brilliantly in terms of suggestive backgrounds which do away with the canvas unrealities of heavy realism. Moe Hack has lighted it dramatically. And it is excellently acted by William Prince, Aline MacMahon, James Monks, Mary Rolfe, Joann Dolan, George Mathews, Eddie O'Shea and a large cast.

In spite of its uncertainties, its untidiness and its sentimentalities; yes, even in spite of such a character as the poetry-spouting Southerner who is so well acted by Mr. Monks, The Eve of St. Mark is a war play that has its genuine merits, chief among which is that it brings the war home as it needs to be brought home. It is hard to see how any American could remain unaffected in its presence.

'THE EVE OF ST. MARK'

A play in two acts and twelve scenes by Maxwell Anderson; directed by Lem Ward; designed by Howard Bay; presented at the Cort Theater on October 7, 1942, by the Playwrights Company. The cast:

Deckman West	Matt Crowley
Cy	Grover Burgess
Nell West	Aline MacMahon
Neil West	Carl Gose
Zip West	Clifford Carpenter
Ralph West	Edwin Cooper
Pete Feller	Stanley G. Wood
Janet Feller	Mary Rolfe
Private Quizz West	William Prince
Private Thomas Mulveroy	Eddie O'Shea
Private Shevlin	David Pressman
Corporal Tate	Charles Mendick
Private Francis Marion	James Monks
Pete Glinka	Martin Ritt
Sergt. Ruley	George Mathews
Sergt. Kriven	Robert Williams
Lill Bird	Joann Dolan
Sal Bird	Toni Favor
Waiter	Charles Ellis
Flash	Dorothea Freed
Dimples	Beatrice Manley
A guard	Kent Adams
Pepita	Joven E. Rola

NEW YORK JOURNAL AMERICAN
October 8, 1942

War Play by Maxwell Anderson a Story of 1942 Soldier's Love and Death

By JOHN ANDERSON

IN MEMORIAM and with wrenching emotion, Maxwell Anderson has written his best play in years, a war play called "The Eve of St. Mark," which the Playwrights Company produced superbly at the Cort last night.

It is a simple tale of a soldier's love and death, written with such force and sympathy that it combines some of the lusty laughter of "What Price Glory" with the grieving tragedy of the Philippines.

Before I haggle over a few reservations, let me set down that it is heroic and heartbreaking, a play to be seen by all means, and with pride.

From a note in the playbill dedicating the play to "Sergt. Lee Chambers, one of the first to go and one of the first to die," we know that the play springs directly from the author's personal grief, translated in general terms to touch and exalt us all.

It is a theme that has impelled the playwright to treat it with fine simplicity. The play's eloquence has none of the verbal ostentation which has so often stifled the author's more synthetic tragedies.

Its effect is achieved without any (almost without any) of the plush theatricals of his recent workmanship. Its one lapse into self-conscious artiness comes late in the play, and is a serious blemish, but the total effect fortunately overcomes it.

The synopsis of scenes tells the story. A farm kitchen, April, 1941; the barracks at Fort Grace, a gangplank, a cave on an island, April, 1942, and finally the kitchen again.

A year moves across the stage; a farm boy goes out to meet the Japs, we see him in the thunderous fury of a Philippine outpost, tottering with malaria but gallant and unyielding, and we go at last back to his bereft family, to his waiting sweetheart, and hear his father say to the other sons as they join up: "Make a better world, boys. God knows we need it."

To lift this pattern of war above the mute mourning of casualty lists, Mr. Anderson has given it the mood of tragic poetry by borrowing a line from Keats for his title and referring to the legend of the Eve of St. Mark.

"On the Eve of St. Mark, if a virgin stand at the church door at dusk, she will see entering the church all those of the parish who are to die that year. If her lover should enter among the others, he will turn and look at her, may perhaps speak."

Salty Army Scenes

By taking the legend too literally, Mr. Anderson has been tempted to write two brief and somewhat embarrassing scenes when the boy on the beleaguered island sees his mother and his sweetheart in a vision, and talks to them in a passage of telepathic chit-chat.

It wrecks the mood of the play, for me at least, by substituting some dynamic spotlights for imagination, and it recalls uncomfortably the cosmic scrubwoman of "The Star Wagon," and the two balmy bessies who made such supernatural bores of themselves in "Candle in the Wind."

If Mr. Anderson felt he had to justify his title, he might have limited the visitation strictly to the sweetheart, but it seems at best a bad way to underscore an overtone which is valuable only to create the tension and atmosphere of romantic doom.

In case all this suggests that the play is tear-stained throughout, I hasten to correct that lugubrious impression. Its army scenes are hilarious. Its soldiers are brilliantly drawn, their talk is salty and full of humor, and their conduct, as a handful defends the blasted rock in the Pacific, simply magnificent.

These are scenes in which Mr. Anderson swings with his old punch, with the full weight of a dramatist who knows human grandeur when he sees it, undimmed by words, postures, or theatrical claptrap. He is writing directly and with fierce compulsion straight at the heart of his subject, and the effect is as honest as it is overwhelming.

Against Howard Bay's simple and highly suggestive settings, the whole thing is played brilliantly under Lem Ward's powerful yet sensitive direction. The last scene fumbles a little over straggling details before it resolves the theme, but its emphasis is right and full of meaning.

The individual performances are excellent and have that dedicated quality the theatre evokes from actors only when they feel they are acting more than a play.

As the young soldier, William Prince plays with rare sincerity and simplicity. Aline MacMahon presents an affecting portrait of the boy's mother. Mary Rolfe is the soldier's attractive sweetheart, and Joann Dolan is enormously funny as a small-town camp-follower who gets a little "elaborate" when she gets tight.

James Monks makes the most of a somewhat unevenly written portrait of an aristocratic Southern private, and there are notable sketches by Eddie O'Shea and George Mathews.

How the war is brought home to people is their own affair. Certainly Mr. Anderson has brought it to the stage.

And for all to see.

"The Eve of St. Mark"

NEW YORK POST
October 8, 1942

Maxwell Anderson's War Play "The Eve of St. Mark" at the Cort

By WILELLA WALDORF

MAXWELL ANDERSON, who has been shut away from reality for the past few years, composing high-flown literary dramas which stubbornly refused to come to life in the theatre, redeemed himself to a considerable degree last night at the Cort with "The Eve of St. Mark," an American war play that is not only eloquent but very moving.

Mr. Anderson has studied the young American draftee before Pearl Harbor and after, and he has written a simple account of what happened to Private Quizz West, an upstate farm boy, in camp and later defending a small island in the Philippines to the death.

There are those, no doubt, who will feel that "The Eve of St. Mark" is oversimplified. But Mr. Anderson, in confining his canvas to Quizz, his family, his girl and a few comrades in arms, has actually painted a picture of all America at war.

The Spirit of Bataan

It is possible, of course, that Quizz and his fellow soldiers may be merely idealized products of Mr. Anderson's lofty meditations on freedom and what it is we are fighting for. But the spirit of the last six men left on that island somewhere in the Philippines rings true. Nobody ordered them to stay as the Japs closed in. In fact, they could creditably have retreated and saved their skins. But they knew that every hour they held off the enemy counted for something, and somehow they couldn't bring themselves to give in.

Mr. Anderson does not bring up the matter of the appalling unpreparedness, the blind stupidity of a nation that permitted these things to happen. He does not plead or rant or go into hysterics. He simply shows half a dozen Americans in a tight place acting like heroes because there's something inside them that refuses to be downed. There are no "big scenes" in "The Eve of St. Mark" in the usual theatrical sense of the term, and the absence of phony heroics makes it far more impressive than it might otherwise have been.

An irrepressible poet at heart, the author relieves himself periodically from the strain of writing prose dialogue by presenting as one of his leading characters an engaging Southerner named Francis Marion whose life before the draft board got him was devoted to Shelley, Keats and T. S. Eliot and waiting for a collection of rich relatives to die and leave him the family fortune. Private Marion quotes copiously from his library at all times, captivating the village tarts who frequent the restaurants near camp, and he is still poetic when out of his head with malaria in the Philippines.

William Prince Heads a Fine Cast

The Playwrights' Company has given the play an effective, easily shifted production on a revolving stage, using spot-lighting against dark backgrounds, and a few props here and there to suggest a change of locale.

The cast is uncommonly fine. Young William Prince, who was so good as the boy in the Theatre Guild's revival of "Ah, Wilderness!" last season, gives a beautifully modulated, tremendously appealing performance as Private Quizz West.

James Monks plays the poetic Southerner with a nice sardonic humor that removes any nauseating quality so much versifying might otherwise have had. Aline MacMahon as the mother and Mary Rolfe as the girl bring warm feeling and a dignified restraint to Quizz's womenfolk at home.

And the soldiers in Quizz's sector are convincingly brought to life by a platoon of good actors performing ably under Lem Ward's understanding guidance. As to the Misses Bird who live near the camp and preferred the town before the Army came to it, Joann Dolan and Toni Favor manage to be not only amusing but even a little touching now and then.

There is some good comedy in "The Eve of St. Mark"—the title is drawn from Keats' poem—but there was also some laughter in the wrong places at last night's premiere. The latter half of the play is a grim business, no matter how lightly some of the soldiers try to take their last-ditch stand on iron rations and no medical supplies.

Mr. Anderson seems to have achieved what many people believed was impossible. He has written a stirring American war play in the midst of war.

NEW YORK SUN
October 8, 1942

'The Eve of St. Mark,' Stirring Drama, Is Offered At the Cort Theater

By RICHARD LOCKRIDGE

MAXWELL ANDERSON tells the story of a soldier and the girl he left behind him in "The Eve of St. Mark," which opened last evening at the Cort Theater. Partly because the time is right for such a story, chiefly because Mr. Anderson tells his with a rare blending of lustiness and compassion, "The Eve of St. Mark" is stirring and invigorating drama. It brings life into the theater, and into the season.

It is a straightforward story, and a simple one. It is the story of Quizz West, who was drafted off a farm and left Janet on the farm up the road and went to camp and fell in with a hearty bunch. He was bullied by Sergeant Ruby and heard Private Marion, a bibulous and attractive gallant of the Old South, spout poetry. He shot craps and went to dog-eared restaurants and life was roistering and strange. Now and then, before they shipped him to the Philippines in the fall of 1941, he got back to the farm—to its quiet, to his mother, to his girl. And then they hauled him off again and put him on a hot rock in the Pacific with the rest of his artillery section and they fired a hot gun at Japs who kept on coming.

They shot the gun, and fought malaria, until there were only six of them and they were told to leave if they wanted to. The officers were dead, even the indestructible Sergeant Ruby was dead. Two of the six were almost too weak to climb up on their rifles and stand straight. There was a chance to get out and they talked about it and finally they voted. Before they voted Quizz West's delirious dreams carried him back to the farm, to his mother and his girl, and in his dreams he clung frantically to life, turned desperately to love. And they voted, without dissent, to stay. Probably they died.

The situation on which "The Eve of St. Mark" turns has an evident similarity to the situation which was central in Mr. Anderson's much more complicated "Key Largo." But this time the men knew what they were fighting for; among these soldiers there was no thoughtful Hamlet. There is a ceiling on psychological hair-splitting for the duration; emotional conundrums are frozen. "The Eve of St. Mark" is a drama without doubts. It celebrates, vigorously, our cause and our men. It celebrates the lasting virtues of fidelity and courage. It makes these qualities exciting, as essentially they always are.

Mr. Anderson has written his love scenes with great charm and delicacy, so that they are at once entirely convincing and deeply touching. In his scenes of army life, here and there, there is great heartiness and humor. For long stretches "The Eve of St. Mark" is the funniest play Mr. Anderson has ever written. It is also one of his most simply written and closest to earth. It puts the theater to fine use.

It is acted as it should be. William Prince plays the part of Quizz with simplicity and honesty; Mary Rolfe's playing of Janet is fresh and perceptive; Aline MacMahon, who makes very few mistakes in the theater, makes none at all in her sensitive interpretation of Quizz's mother. James Monks is delightfully debonair and amusing as Private Marion of the South. A dozen more in the large cast deserve thanks for appreciative acting. This time the actors have a play worth appreciating, and so have we.

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER "PM"
October 8, 1942

The War Begins To Find Its Voice

By LOUS KRONENBERGER

DESPITE its faults, *The Eve of St. Mark* is the first play about the war that has any emotional impact and real humanity. And the reason is as revealing as it is simple: Mr. Anderson has pitched on something so obvious that no one before him seems to have noticed it. It is the simple fact in American life today; it is the war reduced to its most understandable, and at the same time its most inescapable, terms. It carries its own emotion, its own interpretation with it. Mr. Anderson has told the story of American youth in khaki; the story of a boy who leaves his home and his girl and his family, who goes to camp to be trained, who goes from camp to fight, and who on some island in the Pacific faces the horror, and rises to the responsibilities, and succumbs to the fate of war.

It is a story which takes its general pattern straight from the life around us, and because it does, it is often touching and often true. Mr. Anderson furthermore has managed to translate a good deal of it into vivid theater. At times he has given it warmth. At other times he has given it humor. And the plight of the world has given it immediacy. For these reasons *The Eve of St. Mark* is a play that creates an emotion and should find a response.

* * *

It is a good deal of a pity that in telling this story of Quizz West, Mr. Anderson has stunted its full dignity; has plastered it in places with hokum; has, toward the end, flushed it with heroics; has sought at times to underscore its pathos, and at other times has watered it down with words. It is not that Mr. Anderson anywhere violates credibility—even when the forlorn little island remnant votes to stay on after the C. O. gives it permission to evacuate. We encounter such dauntlessness and heroism in every newspaper we read. It is that Mr. Anderson's taste and sensibilities are not equal to such situations; he cannot keep them from seeming theatrical. In the same way, when he gives us a final glimpse of Quizz's girl and family back home, his very restraint seems mawkish and blatant. And when he succumbs to fantasy he does violence to the simple line of his fable.

The really right, the really moving note of the play is a quite different one. It is struck in the more casual scenes of the play, in the homelier ones, in those that are alive with humor. At such times Mr. Anderson not only goes closer to American life, but he somehow reflects the inner spirit of the war, and his picture of endangered American youth is the more touching for its gayety.

The play has been given a good production. Lem Ward's direction is sensitive, Howard Bay's sets are simple, but effective, and most of the acting is ingratiating. In particular, William Prince is likable as Quizz, James Monks is effective as a Southern private who spouts poetry (somebody has to in an Anderson play), Aline MacMahon is warm and restrained as Quizz's mother, Mary Rolfe is touching as Quizz's girl and Joann Dolan is wonderful in a bit part.

"The Eve of St. Mark"

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
October 8, 1942

"Eve of St. Mark," Warm and Human Play, Wins Audience

"The Eve of St. Mark," drama by Maxwell Anderson. Produced by the Playwrights' Company at the Cort Theatre, New York, Oct. 7, 1942.

★ ★ ★+

By BURNS MANTLE

CREDIT Maxwell Anderson with the most human and the most moving of the war dramas to date. "The Eve of St. Mark" at the Cort is the story of an American farm boy who got as far as Bataan credibly, without undue theatrical fuss and only a modest seasoning of heroics.

It is a warm and human document into which are read the reactions of all the boy's family, his sweetheart, a squad of buddies and a camp girl or two.

It is effectively staged and lighted and inspiringly acted by a type-selected cast. Last night's audience received it with a good deal of enthusiasm, particularly for its earlier and saltier scenes carrying the hero from the farm to the front through a series of believably incidental adventures.

When it ran into the familiar last stand defiance of a little band of war-wearied heroes who voted to stay on at Bataan, it managed to hold both the interest and the respect of its audience because Maxwell Anderson has not overwritten nor Lem Ward, the director, over-played the simple eloquence of men who fight and die.

They fight and die, not to win hero rewards or home-town editorials, but because under given circumstances, to fight, even to die, is the only thing their pride and their fundamental decencies will permit them to do.

Heroes for Cause

It was so with Private Quizz West. He went to war because he heard the call and would have been ashamed to deny it. He took his training with as good grace as he could muster.

He met a girl on a tour of Radio City in New York and discovered that she was a neighbor girl of whose blooming into womanhood he had been unconscious.

He batted his way through training, doing his share of the wild things soldier men do seeking relief from monotony and loneliness, but always supported by his pride in his true love.

He went home on furlough, was keen for the consummation of his romance, was called back abruptly to camp and hustled off to San Francisco, across the Pacific and into the fight to hold the Philippines.

Still his courage and his ideals held. In the dreams that misery and longing created he saw his mother and his love. When it came to taking his chance with escape he voted to stay on. They reported him missing in the end, but on a thousand American farms and in a thousand towns there are mothers and sweethearts who will go on believing the Japs took him, and their own lads with him, and that they will all be coming back when it is over.

Unforced Comedy

There is a good deal of natural and unenforced comedy in the earlier scenes, and touches of what seems to be a particularly authentic type of realism in the last stand scenes.

The fight here is not only against the Japs, but against tropical fevers and the failures of the medical supply department. With a Filipino nurse to give a touch of honest color.

Aline MacMahon plays the mother as simply and tenderly as she always does such roles. Mary Rolfe is modestly and persuasively the heroine. William Prince gives the hero character and force without recourse to the cheaper temptations of stage heroes.

There are fine soldier types by Eddie O'Shea, James Monks, George Mathews, and first-class assistance from Matt Crowley and a half dozen others. Howard Bay and Moe Hack did the scenes and the lighting, which are excellent.

NEW YORK TIMES
October 8, 1942

THE PLAY IN REVIEW
"The Eve of St. Mark"

By BROOKS ATKINSON

MAXWELL ANDERSON has restored to the theatre its self-respect. In "The Eve of St. Mark," which was put on at the Cort last evening, he has written a frank play about soldiers at war. Taking an American boy off an up-State farm, he has seen him through the pre-war training period and put him on a Philippine island to be expended.

Twenty years ago Mr. Anderson was co-author of the first mature play the last war tardily yielded. In some respects "What Price Glory" was a better play than "The Eve of St. Mark," which has a dream sequence that departs from the realistic eloquence of most of the writing, and one character, a Southern lad, who is infernally oratorical. But those are details and probably matters of taste. They are unimportant in comparison with the fact that "The Eve of St. Mark" is a hard, tough-minded play that calls things by their right names. Not for some years has Mr. Anderson looked so deeply into the hearts of human beings and written about them with so much simple compassion.

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Not that all of "The Eve of St. Mark" is gloomy. In the relatively carefree days before Pearl Harbor the boys whom the draft has swept into camp have a way of relieving the tedium by horseplay and nonsense. Some of their talk is robustly humorous. Mr. Anderson, who is no prig, has set it down with high relish. To give the play some unity of action, he has concentrated on the career of Private Quizz West, alternating between the kitchen of the farmhouse where his family lives and the scenes of the war—in the barracks, at a cheap honky-tonk, on the pier at San Francisco and finally in the malarial swamps of the Philippines.

Take Private Quizz as an average American boy who does not love war, who goes off to camp with more resignation than eagerness and never once loses his head. His war consciousness is merely enlightenment. He understands what he has to do and why, and he does it, like his comrades, without heroism. His parents and the girl he loves are enlightened, also. They understand the things that may happen. In the end, when Private Quizz is reported missing, they do not deceive themselves cheaply. What makes "The Eve of St. Mark" a profoundly moving play is the realistic honesty of all the characters. In every scene they all face the dour facts courageously.

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Written in twelve scenes, Mr. Anderson's play covers considerable homely territory. Howard Bay has designed it in a series of terse and useful settings. Although the performance is too smiling and conventionally cheerful in the first half of the evening, some of it is directed with insight into human character, and the second half is pithily acted. Mr. Ward has rounded up an excellent cast —Aline MacMahon as a wise and womanly mother, Mary Rolfe as a radiant girl of the neighborhood, and William Prince as Private Quizz, a decent lad who is never far from home in his mind. Through these three characters most of the story is told.

The cast also includes a number of raffish and humorous-minded soldiers, played by Eddie O'Shea, James Monks, George Mathews and others; and a frail or two, one of whom is played with a kind of pathetic hardness by Joann Dolan. Acting with obvious sincerity, they fill out Mr. Anderson's portrait of democracy at war. He has put not only his mind but his heart and understanding into it. No other play has brought so much of the truth and anguish of our war into the theatre.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
October 8, 1942

Inspired War Drama

By HOWARD BARNES

MAXWELL ANDERSON has written straight from the heart in "The Eve of St. Mark." The result is a war drama of emotional tension, humor and poetic splendor. As presented at the Cort Theater by a brilliantly aware company, it is a piece of theater which keeps leaping across the footlights in its communication with the spectator. It is simple in design. It is sternly tragic in theme. These very qualities make it a play which does the stage proud.

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For "The Eve of St. Mark" is exactly what the author must have meant it to be. Somewhat formless and somewhat wordy at times, it still succeeds in combining passion with great clarity of expression. The upstate farm boy who holds out to the end on a God-forsaken island in the Philippines, his family, his buddies and his girl are universal figures in this desperate crisis of mankind. They have heroic stature while remaining people you know or want to know. The dramatic unities can go hang in a war play when it has the power and beauty of this production.

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The author has dedicated his drama to Sergeant Lee Chambers, his nephew—"one of the first to go, one of the first to die that we may keep this earth for free men." It is a flaming and memorable tribute to high courage. Strong emotion has a way of clouding an artist's perception, but it has rarely done that in "The Eve of St. Mark." The army boys are tough, real and tremendously amusing. Their self-elected fate is shattering, but the show has a profound dramatic resolution. Here is something more than a fine war play, I think. It is touched with the eternal magnificence of great tragedy.

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The author has written sensitively and knowingly, but he has had brilliant collaboration. Lem Ward has staged the dozen scenes of the play with great skill, using a few props for settings. The first act, especially, has a drive and economy of exposition which gives it a relentless appeal. The juxtaposition of low comedy barracks interludes with the underlying theme of a shy young fellow going gallantly to his death, with the gallant backing of his folks, is tremendously effective. Meanwhile Moe Hack has employed lighting wizardry to heighten every inflection of the writing and acting.

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As for the performing, it is so uniformly excellent that it is impossible to give one portrayal particular emphasis. Suffice it to say that Aline MacMahon, as the gentle mother of the hero, plays with such brilliant understatement that a flick of her hands is enough to put a lump in your throat; that William Prince plays the kid who decides to hold out against the Japs with compelling honesty; that James Monks is superb as a broken-down Southerner with a cynical twist to his bravery, and that Mary Rolfe is fine as the hero's sweetheart. All the actors act as only a cast can when it is inspired. "The Eve of St. Mark" is in every sense inspired theater.

"Count Me In"

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
October 9, 1942

Charles Butterworth Seen in Count Me In

By JOHN MASON BROWN

PLEASE count me out so far as Count Me In is concerned. There have been musical comedies with poor books which have been saved by good music. There have been musical comedies with poor music which have been saved by good books. But never to my recollection, and regardless of how talent-studded its program may have been, has a musical comedy got by without either a book or music.

Unfortunately this is what Count Me In tries to do. It was first produced in Washington under the auspices of the Catholic University. As a college show it may—I say it may—have seemed right bright. Yet as transferred to New York, and peopled with professionals, and blown up to Broadway dimensions, it is something that is dismally dumb in spite of the fact that Howard Bay has made it beautiful.

The program looks promising enough. Russell Bennett has done the orchestration. The alleged book is staged by Robert Ross. The ever-reliable Robert Alton is responsible for the dancing. The production is supervised by Harry A. Kaufman. Among the numerous sponsors are Olson and Johnson, two worthies whose very names promise dynamite and a madhouse. Hal LeRoy, that amazing young dancer, is slated to appear. Luella Gear is starred. And so is Charles Butterworth, that tired, comical fellow with the face of a dried apricot that just happens to be white. Yes, the same Charles Butterworth who looks like a cross between Roland Young and George Arliss, and whose after-dinner speech years ago in Americana is as well remembered as if it had been delivered yesterday.

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Another War Theme

They are all there to raise your hopes as you read the program. But, alas, the curtain must go up, too. What it reveals is one of the dreariest bores presented as a big musical which has been hereabouts in many a year. The war is the theme of Count Me In; the identical war which the night before Maxwell Anderson was dealing with in terms so compassionate, melting and uplifting in The Eve of St. Mark. That war is not all seriousness, though heaven knows it is grim and desperate. In the midst of its tears Mr. Anderson showed the humor which is a part of its gallantry. The authors of Count Me In have not been successful. Although gaiety is their full-time business, The Trojan Women seems like an hilarious lark compared with the comedy they have fathered.

Their hero is a little mapmaker (Mr. Butterworth) whose whole family is in the war and who wants to get in himself. His wife (Miss Gear) is in uniform. His daughter has taken first aid. One son (Mr. LeRoy) is a dancing air-raid warden, the other is a leaping pilot (Gower Champion). In the poorest of poor taste, and in the sleepiest of sleep terms this family saga drowses from New York to Australia and back in the Sleepy Hollow, which is Walter Kerr's and Leo Brady's book.

* * *

Settings Well Designed

Mr. Butterworth seems pathetically lost. So does the trim, slim Miss Gear, who should apply her description of the first act finale to the whole show. So does Irene Sharaff, many of whose costumes are hard to look at. And so does the book. Only veteran air-raid wardens could find their way around in such a blackout.

Mr. Bay's settings are as excellently designed as if they were done for a good show. Mr. LeRoy gets along when his gifted feet speak for him. Mr. Champion, another dancer, is likewise able to defy the words, though not the uniform. June Preisser also is on hand if this by any chance should bring you pleasure. And becoming very much involved with themselves are some lady acrobats who are so unbearably pretzel-like that a stiff dose of mothersill is needed to look at them with comfort.

All in all, Count Me In is the kind of musical comedy that it would be a pleasure to make a present of to people that you don't like. Perhaps it may do some good, however. Perhaps it will teach playwrights and producers that the woman-in-uniform joke is dead enough to be buried!

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
October 9, 1942

"Count Me In" Was a College Show Before Broadway Got It

"Count Me In," musical comedy by Walter Kerr and Leo Brady; music and lyrics by Ann Ronell. Produced by the Messrs. Shubert, Olsen, Johnson, Krakeur and Schmidlapp at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre, New York, Oct. 8, 1942.

★ ★+

By BURNS MANTLE

I SHOULD hate to be the first to discourage the Messrs. Walter Kerr and Leo Brady, who were responsible for the original draft of the "Count Me In" musical comedy that opened at the Ethel Barrymore theatre last night.

They are a couple of well-intentioned young men of talent, reasonably original and clean minded, and nobody knows what has happened to their book since it was bought for Broadway.

But it cannot truthfully be written that the boys' efforts last evening were conspicuously favorable to their future. They undertake to tell a perfectly good musical comedy tale of a timid papa who finds himself the center of a war-conscious family and starts an investigation of the family's activities. Mother is a WAAC, daughter a messenger, son an air warden and so on.

But as staged there is little fun in papa, and less in the family. And no wit in either. Which leaves the show pretty much up to the specialists engaged to double in dialogue.

Thus we get Charles Butterworth bringing a once distinguished dead pan back from the coast, with no fitting place to employ it. And Luella Gear returning from her latest rest period with all her old snap but only one or two spots to use it.

We get Hal Leroy dancing as cleverly as any of them, and more cleverly than most of them; and Melissa Mason flaying her long legs amusingly; and Gower and Jeanne dancing like a couple of untarnished Broadway angels; and June Preisser making faces and the three Ross sisters bending themselves into pretzel twists amazingly; and Milton Watson and Mary Healy singing a couple of pretty good ballads.

But we don't get much of a show. Certainly not one worth the higher tariffs in this department's book of standards.

Good Music

There is a musical score by a young lady named Ann Ronell, and that is promising. It includes a variety of ensemble numbers of quality, a couple of good ballads in "You've Got It All," and "On Leave for Love," a comedy item, "Ticketyboo"; a character bit, "Who Is General Staff?" and an ambitious number, with ballet, "Women of the Year."

I have an idea, however, that when "Count Me In" was produced at the Catholic University in Washington that it did have more consistency and probably a better vein of satire, political and social, than have lasted through the doctoring to which it has been subjected.

In trying to bring it down to Broadway levels the story has been lost, and somebody has bungled the choice of comedy types.

The production, supervised by Harry Kaufman, and generously outfitted by the Messrs. Shubert and Olsen and Johnson, furnishes a superior background. Something may yet be done with this to work with.

NEW YORK POST
October 9, 1942

"Count Me In" A Musical Comedy About The Home Front

By WILELLA WALDORF

"COUNT ME IN" started off last night at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre with plenty of snap. The first three or four numbers went off so smartly that we were convinced a bright topical revue had come to town—a revue with a dash of plot kidding women in uniform. "Vickie" does the same thing without music. "Count Me In" indicated that it might turn the trick more cleverly and with less strain.

Then it began to run out of ideas, and started repeating itself. Pretty soon they were tossing in everything that happened to be handy.

"There's a suggestion of 'Sons o' Fun' about this," we muttered to ourself, and sure enough, there on the program were Olsen and Johnson listed among the producers. No doubt they sent over some spare parts from the Winter Garden when the roar went up for more and better gags.

"Count Me In" fools you for a while, for it is briskly paced by Robert Alton, whose dance routines are always snappily staged. The sets and costumes are bright and colorful, the girls, many of them, cute. The cast bulges with specialty dancers who can step, and Charles Butterworth and Luella Gear are on hand to provide comedy.

Life Without Father

Mr. Butterworth plays Mr. Brandywine, who is in the map business. His family deserts him for Civilian Defense duties of one sort or another, and he decides to get into some sort of war work himself. But nobody wants him. Women are running everything now on the Home Front. His own wife trots around in a nifty blue uniform, a sergeant, no less. One of his daughters is named Sherry Brandywine.

Mr. Butterworth is pretty amusing in his mild, bewildered fashion until the book lets him down. By the second half of the show he is struggling against odds, and the whole thing ends in a dire finale involving lantern slides. Miss Gear was less happy than Mr. Butterworth. None of her material struck us as particularly diverting.

The whole business started months ago as a topical revue put on by students at Catholic University, Washington, D. C. It must have been a lot of fun down there. Revamped for Broadway, however, it probably wasn't vigorous enough, and then the filling out process started. The result is a peculiar hodge-podge of good, fair and just plain sappy stuff, some of which looks and sounds out of place in what is, after all, an expensively mounted production serviced by some of our most talented technicians.

Nana the Dog Out of "Peter Pan"

High spots we remember amid the confusion are Hal LeRoy's dancing, the graceful stepping of Gower and Jeanne (who would be pleasanter if they didn't try to talk while twirling), several of the ensemble dance numbers (though not the one patterned after the Jooss Ballet) and some of Ann Ronell's songs, whose melodies were catchy. The lyrics were sometimes clever, sometimes merely childish.

No musical show is complete these days without a dog act, and "Count Me In" provides Nana right out of "Peter Pan." Alfred Latell, who once dogged Maude Adams, is up to his old tricks and funnier than some of the jokes.

Altogether "Count Me In" is a curious hodge-podge that probably has something in it for everybody, like a grab bag. Now and then a prize package turns up but there is also a lot of junk.

"Count Me In"

NEW YORK SUN
October 9, 1942

"Count Me In," a Listless Musical, Opens at the Ethel Barrymore Theater

By RICHARD LOCKRIDGE

AT FIRST glance everything would seem to be all right with "Count Me In," a musical comedy which was presented at the Ethel Barrymore Theater last evening. The pretty girls are in their proper places, Luella Gear and Charles Butterworth are on hand for comedy, the production is spic and span and in gay good taste. Nothing is missing, as it turns out, but entertainment.

The really uncanny lifelessness of "Count Me In" presumably is due in considerable measure to the book, which is almost too vague to grasp. Singularly uneventful music contributes; lyrics which seem to die as they leave the singers' lips must play a part. It is still hard to understand how a show which seems to be going forward so briskly can so evidently go nowhere; how so sprightly a scene can be so strangely lacking in real animation.

The plot which trickles through the numerous scenes concerns a man known as Papa, all the members of whose family are oddly engaged in war work. Papa is neglected; he dreams a map which shows the location of Shangri-La and shows it surrounded by disappearing islands; he goes to a concentration camp to give this map, without the surrounding islands, to the Japanese; the Japanese close in on Shangri-La and are surprised by American forces lurking in the disappearing islands and Papa is a great man. All right. That's what Walter Kerr and Leo Brady say. Maybe it's satire, would you think?

Certainly it is developed, if developed is the word, with a minimum of conviction and a remarkable absence of humor. Ann Ronell's monotonous music fits the plot; Miss Gear and Mr. Butterworth evidently do not, since each manages now and then to find moments for drollery. You will approve also of the dancing of Hal Leroy and June Preisser, who are always fun, and probably of the capers cut by Gower and Jeanne. There are some contortionistic girl dancers also, but one doesn't have to look. And there is a great deal of tedium.

For this almost indiscernible show—which must surely have seemed gayer when amateurs did it at Catholic University in Washington, from whence it emerged—Irene Sharaff has designed costumes which are a delight and Howard Bay has contrived settings which are individually fresh and engaging. Every one connected with the production, indeed, has gone to no end of trouble, thus putting a high professional polish on what amounts to nothing at all.

'COUNT ME IN'

A musical comedy in two acts; book by Walter Kerr and Leo Brady; music and lyrics by Ann Ronell; numbers staged by Robert Alton; costumes by Irene Sharaff; book staged by Robert Ross; settings by Howard Bay; presented at the Ethel Barrymore Theater on October 8, 1942, by the Messrs. Shubert and Olsen and Johnson, in association with Krakeur and Schmidlapp. In the cast are Charles Butterworth, Luella Gear, Hal Leroy, June Preisser, Mary Healy, Gower and Jeanne, Melissa Mason, Alice Dudley, Milton Watson, the Ross Sisters and others.

NEW YORK JOURNAL AMERICAN
October 9, 1942

All-American Musical Comedy Uses Many Talented Performers in Cast

By JOHN ANDERSON

THOUGH six estimable gentlemen of the theatre have pooled their forces, lavished their money, and employed the services of many talented people, the results seemed hardly worth all the trouble when "Count Me In," billed as "An All-American Musical Comedy," opened last night at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre.

There are enough names in it for two shows, including Charles Butterworth, long absent in Hollywood; Luella Gear, Hal LeRoy, June Preisser, and so on and so on. Robert Alton staged the dances, Robert Ross the book. Miss Sharaff did the costumes, Howard Bay the settings. These are all top-flight specialists.

But somehow they are all entangled in a musical comedy plot that is more a loose-leaf folder than a book, set to some peculiarly forgettable music by Ann Ronell. There were times when I thought the book had been driven successfully underground, and then it would pop out again, and spread a thin patina of ennui on the proceedings.

Since Mr. Butterworth always has seemed to me to be immensely funny I had looked forward to his return firm in the belief that when he brought on his dead pan expression, and the hilarious look of a benign, but whimsical horse, I would promptly abandon myself to the aisles in violent laughter.

Mr. Butterworth has often had this peculiar effect, but he seemed lost in the foggy irrelevance of "Count Me In." His dazed expression seemed too poignant to be funny in its forlorn suggestion of a man script-wrecked on a desert libretto.

The presumably comic idea of "Count Me In" is that Mr. Butterworth is a wistful and somewhat baffled map-maker and the head of a family so war-crazy that he is hopelessly neglected. He wanders around trying to make connections with the belligerents, and cooks up some silly scheme for getting a false map to Japan showing the position of Shangri-La in the hope that the Imperial Military Staff will then make a drive on the spot and fall neatly into a trap. In a way it may be a pity that wars are not run by musical comedy librettists, though they might be more dangerous.

All this is nothing much more than an excuse for keeping the cast in uniforms of one sort or another. As a point of showmanship this is probably debatable, since even civilians may draw a line somewhere on the use of uniforms except by legitimate wearers thereof.

The one satisfactory result is that it has made Mr. Alton an eminently resourceful drill-master and the dance routines have precision and smartness. Mr. LeRoy is as brilliant as ever at his engaging stepping and the ensembles are excellent. By all odds the show is at its best when it is out there on its feet.

Back in Old Form

After an unhappy bout with prematurely exhumed vaudeville Miss Gear is quite back in her old form, in all meanings of the word, and while her material is rather laborious, she makes the most of it. I wish I could admire lady contortionists with the same enthusiasm but the better they are the worse they seem to me and the Ross sisters must be practically perfect, so limber are they, so structurally illogical, so pretzel.

There is no use painfully itemizing the others. They are all tried and true entertainers, and the producers have plainly given them an opulent and at times handsome show to cavort in. Everything seems to be in fine shape except the two things which finally make up musical comedy.

To wit: music and comedy.

NEW YORK TIMES
October 9, 1942

THE PLAY IN REVIEW
"Count Me In"

By BROOKS ATKINSON

IF "COUNT ME IN" looks like a show it is not difficult to tell the reason why. Irene Sharaff has designed the costumes. For several years she has been imparting gaiety and electricity to musical shows by the use of design and color. But what she has done for the musical comedy that arrived at the Ethel Barrymore last evening deserves a prize. It is wonderfully imaginative; it is brilliant and stunning. Miss Sharaff has even discovered how to make Uncle Sam's unobtrusive and eminently practical Army uniform blend into the fantasy of a musical show.

When the costume designer carries off first honors things are in poor proportion. "Count Me In" is a case in point. Walter Kerr and Leo Brady have written an industrious book that is apparently intended to put Charles Butterworth back in the theatre. Anything anyone can do to achieve that purpose has this column's cooperation. For Mr. Butterworth, the limp and docile master of understatement, is an amiable comedian who is vastly amusing if he has suitable material.

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Once upon a time he was a one-string player with nothing much except langour for laughs. But now he has a positive way of expressing negative comedy. He speaks lines with authority. There is a gleam in his eye that points up his dazed and footless clowning. When Mr. Butterworth first impinged himself on the hurried awareness of this town in the "Americana Revue" he may have been a lucky accident. But he has become a fully resolved working comedian during the years. Like Luella Gear, who is his partner here, he deserves a part and some practicable material.

"Count Me In" has one of the most busily useless books in years. It intends to report the frivolities of a nation at war and endeavors to find a chapter for every service. But the writing is hackneyed; the lines are flat. Never was there a book that kept pushing the show off the stage so aggressively as this one. Ann Ronell has matched it by writing the music and lyrics without individuality. Although "You've Got It All" has a sweet melody and "Who is General Staff?" has pace and humor, Miss Ronell's score is mostly imitative work.

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Like Miss Sharaff, Robert Alton has done a stunning job in his department. He has directed some brisk and exhilarating dances which almost persuade you that "Count Me In" is a lively occasion. Witness, for example, the half-wry humors of the dance for the grinning Jap quartet. That number is full of crisp and shrewd vitality.

Mr. Alton has some good performers to help him. Hal LeRoy is dancing like a wizard with wings, and he is also speaking lines in a winning manner. Gower and Jeanne dance some crackling swing duets, and June Preisser tap-dances and makes faces simultaneously. Mary Healy is a pleasant girl to have around for singing or dancing on any occasion. As far as that goes, the chorus girls make good eyesight a thing of value and pleasure.

Probably a deaf man would enjoy "Count Me In" better than a man whose faculties are unfortunately unimpaired. For a deaf man could take delight in the bizarre beauties of Miss Sharaff's costumes, the vigor of Mr. Alton's dances and the freshness of the dancing maidens. The belligerent dullness of the book would not slowly drive him out of his mind.

"Count Me In"

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
October 9, 1942

Count Me Out

By HOWARD BARNES

"COUNT ME IN" has an impressive array of performers. From Charles Butterworth and Luella Gear in the starring spots to Gower and Jeanne or the Rhythmaires in specialty numbers, the new musical at the Ethel Barrymore Theater is well served. All that is wanting is a show. A dreary book is punctuated by dull musical interludes, unless the dancers are out there giving with their feet.

Musical comedy can be infinitely elastic, but it needs far more drive and gaiety than you will find in this production not to prove disappointing.

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What makes the offering doubly disappointing is its prodigious waste of talent. Butterworth has always struck me as the type of reticent clown who could muddle through any sort of material. Miss Gear has handled more than one inane situation triumphantly in the past. The fact remains that they are both hamstrung through most of the proceedings at the Barrymore. For one or two scenes of comic excitement and sharp caricature which they achieve, there are half a dozen which are tasteless, unimaginative and downright soporific.

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If the Walter Kerr-Leo Brady book can be said to have a line of continuity, it is in its satirical contemplation of an American family going to war. There are a series of gibes at women in uniform, which are rarely funny. There are random song and dance tributes to our armed services abroad. And there is a central burlesque about the old man, who launches a bit of counter-espionage of his own. The material is timely enough. It just isn't bright. Since the Ann Ronnel songs are seldom catchy, the players haven't much of a chance in "Count Me In."

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They rise to every occasion which offers them even an opportunity for comic improvisation. Butterworth is immensely funny in one or two sketches. Miss Gear gives a splendid account of herself in a number in which she is supposed to be training a platoon of uniformed women. Gower and Jeanne dance brilliantly and so, of course, does Hal LeRoy, while the Rhythmaires do a nice bit of hoofing and vocalizing. Mary Healy is attractive in an amorphous role, but the other performers almost never succeed in making bad material look better. "Count Me In" held high promise of engaging musical comedy antics, what with its cast, its sextet of producers and expansive staging by Robert Ross and Robert Alton. It is a pity that sponsors and players did not have more to work with.

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER "PM"
October 9, 1942

Less a Review Than a Warning

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

IT WOULD be dandy if the Government should decide that musical comedy books were needed in the manufacture of tanks or munitions or something, and hence barred them from civilian use for the duration. At the least, there ought to be some way of chaining most of them up or putting the worst of them in quarantine. You will have judged by now that these unsociable thoughts were brought on by something called *Count Me In* and you can hardly be surprised if I succumb to the obvious and ask that you count me out.

By reason of its book, last night's show is about as stupefying a bore as anybody could think up. It leaves a good many talented and amiable people high and dry, or squeesed between the pincers of the plot, or writhing in agony as the victims of its gags. It must certainly be intended as symbolism when, halfway through the show, Charles Butterworth is led off the stage handcuffed. He has the added misfortune, however, to have to come back on again.

Count Me In tells about a family who, except for Papa, are all doing something in the war. Mama is a WAAF, one son is an air warden, another is in the army, and daughter does hospital work. We have to follow the activities of each for very long stretches besides seeing father get it in the neck, only to emerge a hero at the end. Fortunately, there are interruptions in the way of music and dancing—though the music is never very inspired, and is far too often reprised. The dancing, in fact, offers the only real bright spot of the evening. Hal LeRoy is a very accomplished tap-dancer, and whenever he is performing things perk up enormously. Gower and Jeanne are pleasant and graceful as always. Robert Alton has also put the chorus through some lively routines, and Irene Sharaff has dressed them in bright and shiny colors.

Otherwise, things merely drift and drag. As the comics of the enterprise, Luella Gear and Charles Butterworth—both good people when they are given a chance—are stymied from the start. *Count Me In* is, I believe, the season's first musical comedy. One can only pray that it will be the season's worst one as well.

"Let Freedom Sing"

NEW YORK TIMES
October 6, 1942

THE PLAY IN REVIEW

"Let Freedom Sing"

By BROOKS ATKINSON

IN LESS than a year the ambitious young people of the Youth Theatre have progressed from "Of V We Sing" to "Let Freedom Sing," which was put on at the Longacre last evening. Since Mitzi Green has joined the troupe to sing whatever the composers have to offer, since Paul duPont has dressed the show in attractive costumes, and since Herbert Andrews has set it in modern taste with excellent lighting, "Let Freedom Sing" represents a considerable step upward for a band of frisky ideologists who are stage-struck. Now the talented amateurs of "Of V We Sing" are approaching the boy-and-girl professionalism of "Meet the People." Since Harold Rome has written most of the music, "Let Freedom Sing" sounds like a medley of "Pins and Needles" and "Sing Out the News."

* * *

Something is whirring around inside the minds of the young theatre myrmidons, but it has not yet created a new pattern. A faint touch of the synthetic permeates everything they do, and sometimes, as in the sketch in a Washington rooming-house, the spirit is willing but the humor is dismal. Watch out for intellectuals when they turn comedian: their satire is not hearty enough for the commercial theatre. And watch out, also, for shows that give every voice the same shrill, tinny sound through use of mechanical amplifiers. Although the Longacre is a small theatre, "Let Freedom Sing" is strained through a mechanism that produces echoes and makes every song sound like a scratching needle.

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With that morose comment out of the way let's pass on to the virtues of the show. It is topical. Mitzi Green, who was swinging "The Lady Is a Tramp" in gusty professional style a few years ago, is now singing "The Lady Is a Waac" in a style that is practically equivalent. In the second half of the program Miss Green and Betty Garrett, who is also a good performer, toss in a rough-and-tumble Waac sketch that is equally amusing. Although the music of "History Eight to the Bar" is familiar, it has a good deal of exuberance and jauntiness and Miss Garrett sings it with infectious enjoyment.

The comics are Berni Gould, a round-faced clown and Phil Leeds, a cadaverous, loose-jointed noody. In two patter items they are very funny—two arm-chair strategists fighting out campaign problems on a street-corner and two New Yorkers trying to give directions for getting to Gramercy Square (don't they mean Gramercy Park?) by subway or bus. Mr. Leeds's scatter-brained satire on "Flowers in Bloom"—music by Jock Gerald, lyrics by David Gregory—would be more enjoyable if it were not so blatantly stolen from the Paula Lawrence mad-house. Later in the program Mr. Leeds and Miss Garrett contributed a humorous urchin antic called "Johnny Is a Hoarder."

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Since the sketch-makers seem to be suffering from writer's cramp, most of "Let Freedom Sing" is song. The best song is a quiet and homely invocation to America, "The House I Live In"—music by Earl Robinson and words by Lewis Allen. Although Mordecai Bauman does not sing it particularly well, he sings it with earnest sincerity, without feeling that he must imitate youth by blasting the voice amplifying system and cutting a rug.

As a tour de force by some young people who are determined to crash Broadway or bust, "Let Freedom Sing" is a considerable achievement. It is a good deal more professional than the apprentice work of last season, particularly in the staging. But the Youth Theatre still needs original authors, composers, performers and ideas. Mitzi Green is a talented, good-hearted girl who knows her business, and Betty Garrett is a close second. But they are not yet overwhelming enough to carry the burden of a show on their shoulders.

"Let Freedom Sing"

NEW YORK SUN
October 6, 1942

'Let Freedom Sing,' a Topical Revue by the Youth Theater, Presented at Longacre.

THE Youth Theater, which made its Broadway debut last season with "Of V We Sing," tried its luck again at the Longacre Theater last evening with another topical revue. This one is called "Let Freedom Sing" and it's as timely as the latest edition of your favorite newspaper.

It has a friendly jauntiness and plenty of youthful zest to commend it, too, and a breezy unpretentiousness that is disarming. These youngsters, some of them alumni of a Flatbush little theater group, keep their show rolling swiftly from 8:45 until 11, and along the way they unfold much that is both clever and entertaining. In fact if "Let Freedom Sing" were all as good as its best parts, the Youth Theater might well find itself today with a resounding hit on its hands.

Unfortunately, however, this revue among other things is spotty in its material, and some of its numbers, particularly those in which the propagandists are laying their hands a bit heavily on the proceedings, are either dull or fail to come off completely. Among the definite liabilities is a number dedicated to Grandpa Guerrilla.

And on the debit side, too, we would list a skit harking back to "What Price Glory," which the WAACS aren't apt to like, and for that we shouldn't blame them.

On the other hand, there is plenty to be entered high on the right side of the ledger: the Pan-American number that opens the second act and a skit on the Washington of today, to name a couple of items.

The small but energetic cast is headed by Mitzi Green, erstwhile hoyden of the films. When she forgets that she was once Hollywood's mischievous little darling, Miss Green is gustily entertaining and her comings and goings add greatly to the general vitality of the proceedings. Also when she is searching for Private Jones and later tearing apart a song neatly, entitled "Fraught," we found her vastly amusing.

"Let Freedom Sing" also boasts a pair of excellent comedians, Phil Leeds and Berni Gould by name, who at times come close to stealing the show. Whether he is chiding Pierre Laval for the State Department or portraying a Senator calling for calm, Mr. Gould is an exceedingly comical fellow. Mr. Leeds, in turn, grimaces his way most amusingly through a musical lecture on flowers and is an excellent foil for Miss Green in her "Fraught" number. Together Mr. Leeds and Mr. Gould contribute one of the choice bits of the evening as armed with umbrellas they squabble over the merits of their respective war tactics. Also they team up in a very funny dissertation on our subways.

'LET FREEDOM SING'

Musical revue presented by the Youth Theater at the Longacre Theater on October 5, 1942. Staged by Joseph C. Pevney. Dance direction by Dan Eckley. Musical direction by Lou Cooper. Sketches by Sam Locke. Music and Lyrics mostly by Harold Rome. Additional music and lyrics by Earl Robinson, Marc Blitzstein, Lou Cooper, Roslyn Harvey and Walter Kent. Settings by Herbert Andrews. Costumes by Paul du Pont. The cast: Mitzi Green, Berni Gould, Lee Sullivan, Betty Garrett, Phil Leeds, Mordecai Bauman, Remi Martel, Buddy Yarus, Margie Jackson, Harry Mack, Joan Dexter, Jack Baker, Jules Racine, Bob Davis, Bill Randall, Jane Johnstone, Marion Warnes, Ethel Sherman, Lois Girard and Pat Shibley.

Among the other featured players Betty Garrett proves vivaciously engaging, especially as a blithe schoolma'am and also as a South American with her plea of "Give Us a Viva."

Some of Harold Rome's lyrics are clever and bright, but his score is more serviceable than distinguished. The song, from the show most likely to be remembered is "The Things We Like," a haunting little tune composed by Lou Cooper.

The production as a whole is simply but attractively staged. In fact, if you don't enter the portals of the Longacre with your hopes too high you are likely to get plenty of fun out of "Let Freedom Sing." At least we did.

HERRICK BROWN.

NEW YORK JOURNAL AMERICAN
October 6, 1942

Mitzi Green Stars in New Informal Revue Presented By the Youth Theatre

By JOHN ANDERSON

IN THE barren dramatic depths of last Winter, probably when the critics had all resolved to commit mass suicide after seeing "They Should Have Stood in Bed," they postponed the deed to go up to 58th St. and give the Youth Theatre an indulgent pat upon its pretty head, a salute from the grave to the cradle.

Last night the pat, the Youth Theatre, and the critics all came home to roost at the Longacre where "Let Freedom Sing" had its premiere as successor to "Of V We Sing." It is a small, informal revue, full of vitamins, high spirits and other official symptoms of youth, and it contains a few amusing items. But I hope the youngsters will forgive the report that their promise has not yet been translated into performance.

They have now, it is true, more scenery and costumes and a slightly slicker air of professional entertainment. They have more assurance, they have music and lyrics (mostly by Harold Rome), direction by Joseph C. Pevney, settings by Herbert Andrews, and costumes by Paul duPont. But I'm afraid they haven't quite got what it takes.

Laugh at Windbags

Possibly war has robbed youth of its special viewpoint which made the timely and astringent irreverence of "Pins and Needles" so stimulating, and put a cutting edge even on some of the numbers in "Meet the People." The boys and girls at the Longacre sing about freedom and victory, which are fine things to sing about, and they poke fun at the senatorial windbag which is anybody's target. They are lyrically cheerful about our South American allies, they scorn hoarding with suitable patriotic zeal, and thumb their adolescent noses righteously at wealthy and aristocratic refugees who so willingly accept the protection of a country they abhor while longing safely for the good old days. There are a couple of amiable sketches about women in uniform, and one about war time Washington.

But these subjects are, alas! not the special property of any particular age bracket. They could belong as well to the Upper Youth and Lower Middle-Aged Theatre Group, or just to the Old Jokes at Home. There is a loud cheer for Russia's warriors, but no heartier than you might find in a guardedly conservative editorial.

Puts Song Across

Lacking then, any distinctive material, the revue falls back on its personalities and in spite of the showy and somehow insistent presence of Mitzi Green it is at its best with members of the original company. Miss Green has a way with a song, as she proved a season or so ago in "The Lady Was a Tramp," but her material is certainly reminiscent, and not very good and the burden of her many numbers tends to become monotonous.

Betty Garrett, who was one of the outstanding members of "Of V We Sing," improves enormously on further acquaintance and with more varied material. She has a mischievous manner, a good sense of comedy, looks, and the ability to put over a song, even if she hasn't anything as good as "Don't Sing Solo" to put over.

As screwball comic Phil Leeds plainly has a talent that deserves better material, for he does admirably with what he has, and Berni Gould (recently funnyman Homer in "By Jupiter") shows the gusto of a good comedian, though, he, too, is handicapped in the writing department.

Even the precocious geniuses Noel Coward once identified as "Destiny's tots" need material.

Otherwise, I fear, Destiny totters.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
October 6, 1942

Youth, Youth!

By HOWARD BARNES

THE youngsters are having their innings at the Longacre. "Let Freedom Sing" finds them bounding and tripping through two dozen assorted songs and sketches. A score card of their antics should read simply: no hits, no runs and a multitude of errors. This new offering of Youth Theatre is as tasteless and unimaginative a hodge-podge of skits and music as the juveniles have ever perpetrated on Broadway. Even the saving quality of enthusiasm is badly missing in the proceedings. Whatever the age range of the collaborators on the show may be, they should take time out to learn their would-be craft.

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Like "Of V We Sing," the musical is topical when it is not merely catch-as-catch-can. There are satiric thrusts at Congress, the Waacs, overcrowding in Washington, blackouts, Austrian noblemen and Noel Coward. The numbers have one common quality. They have the rapier-like quality of a bludgeon. Occasionally, a fresh-faced and ambitious performer achieves a slight twist of gaiety in a bit of business, but on the whole "Let Freedom Sing" is a bad blow to the cause of giving theatrical aspirants their say in stage doings.

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The surprising thing is that the boys and girls involved in this stage misadventure have been around. Mitzi Green, who has been acting longer than most of her colleagues twice her age, heads the company. Those who saw "Of V We Sing" or "Meet the People" will recognize other troupers who are not unfamiliar with grease paint. The best that one can say for most of them is the fact that they seem to be trying hard. Perhaps they all try too hard.

* * *

Certainly they have some dismal material to handle. The sketches make a studied attempt to be youthfully rebellious, but most of them wind up as obvious and wearisome comments on the current scene. The songs are by Harold Rome, who has done some fine tune-smithing in the past, but with the exception of "I Did It for Defense" and possibly "History Right to the Bar," they are singularly undistinguished. Veterans would have had a tough time putting over the alleged fun-making of "Let Freedom Sing."

* * *

Miss Green carries the major share of the acting and without any marked success. Far better in both the songs and the lampoons is an attractive youngster, Betty Garrett, who captures some of the zest and excitement one has a right to expect from a juvenile musical show. Phil Leeds is fine when he isn't remembering Bert Lahr and Berni Gould has a few moments of minor triumph. "Let Freedom Sing" is far from a triumph for any one concerned. It might get by in a high school auditorium. It is embarrassing on Broadway.